

APRIL '84

TIMEX Sinclair



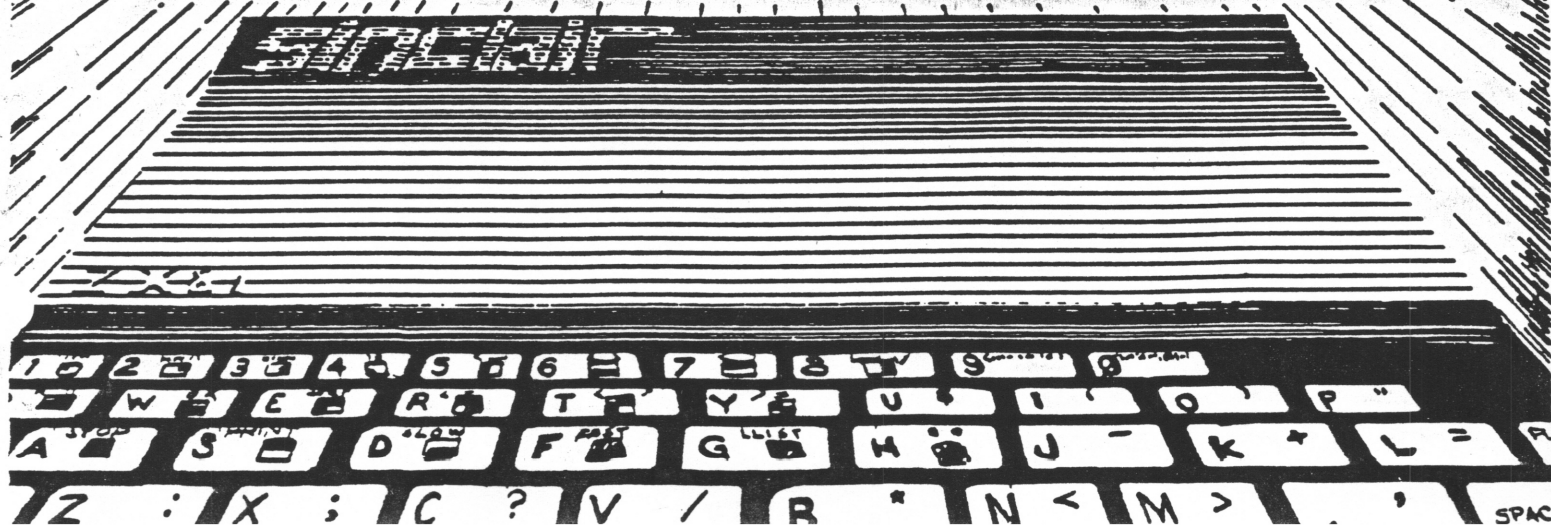
Where's the TIMEX Computer Corporation?

What happens to the million TIMEX/Sinclair computer owners?

We at the Sinclair Computer Users Society (SINCUS) don't have all the answers, but we are looking.

We meet the 3rd Wednesday of each month, at 7 pm, at the Vestal Public Library (May 16, 1984 and June 17, for sure) You can meet with users of the ZX80, ZX81, TS1000, TS1500 and the new TS2068. Review software, see hardware, learn and teach, write for a newsletter, add to a tape library, borrow back issues of computer mags. Meetings are open to the public. Stop in, listen and join in. For info write to and include a SASE for a fast reply:

SINCUS
P.O. Box 36
Johnson City, NY 13790



"SINCUS" April 1984

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"SINCUS" is a publication of the Sinclair Users Society, published 10 times per year.

Articles may be reprinted if you send two copies of the publication where the reprint appears to:

EDITOR, SINCUS
P.O. Box 523
Owego, New York 13827

All articles represent the opinion of the author and may not necessarily be the opinion of the Sinclair Users Society, P.O. Box 36, Johnson City, New York 13790

ADVERTISING RATES

SINCUS members may have a half column up to 22 lines FREE

Advertising rates for other ads are as follows:

BUSINESS CARD SIZE	\$ 3.00
QUARTER PAGE AD	\$ 6.00
HALF PAGE AD	\$10.00
FULL PAGE AD	\$16.00

Ads run for at least 150 copies (even if that takes two issues)

W O R K E B Y P A U L

by Paul Hill

From KNIGHTED COMPUTERS, Fulton, NY, along with an ad for the TIMEX-Sinclair 2068 for \$129.95, TIMEX-Sinclair 2040 Printer \$69.95. BOTH for \$189.95.

Also from KNIGHTED COMPUTERS - "...sorry to hear that SYNC has decided not to publish any more magazines."

From Bill Stemples and et al, TIMEX, through the "hotline" number (800-24-TIMEX) is selling the TS2068 for \$99.95! Probably a couple hundred thousand 2068's going for half price! Prices are dropping on software, many package deals going around.

To Gary Ennis, congrats on 1st anniversary as editor and chief cook and bottle washer of SINCUS NEWS. The new printing looks sharp. Hope it gives you more time for other ideas. Gary has done an outstanding job for the club over the past year, many thanks from many grateful readers and co-members.

I'd like to bring up at the next meeting for vote, the following:

1. DUES CHANGE - July 1, 1984 - all dues to be one rate (\$8.00) per year, paid once a year. Corresponding (non-voting) member to remain at the same rate (\$6.00) for 10 issues.
2. VACANCIES - President may appoint to fill vacant offices in lieu of general election. Vacancy of office to be determined by: resignation, lapse of dues, non-performance of office duties. Majority of Executive Committee to determine non-performance of office.

The dues change to make it easier to budget, account for dues, and cost per member shared equally by all. The other change to make it easier on the next president to keep officers in office. We did run part of the year without a Recording Secretary and all year without a Vice President.

Doug Hoover is covering his duties for the election process in this newsletter, because I forgot to call him at the last meeting. This year the ballot will be part of May's newsletter, so don't forget to it out and bring it to the May meeting or mail it prior to the meeting.

Next month I hope to write a review and show at next meeting, a Hi-Res tool kit (Prism) by Richard Taylor. It is for the 1000s, and so far it looks very interesting. It isn't a self running program, you have to write a program that will use it! I'm shooting for something at the April 18 meeting.

If more members would volunteer to demo at each meeting, like we've had for the past year and a half, the next year and a half will be great. Thanks to all who have contributed!

Paul Hill
President
SINCUS

TIMEXLY TIPS

CORRECTION TO LAST MONTH'S TIMEXly Tips:

If you want to write a letter regarding the status of TIMEX products and/or express your support for the Sinclair computer system, the more correct addresses are:

TIMEX COMPUTER CORPORATION
ATTN: C. Michael Jacobi
Vice President
Marketing and Sales
P.O. Box 2655
Waterbury, Connecticut 06725

SINCLAIR RESEARCH
50 Stanford Street
Suite 800
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

SINCLAIR RESEARCH LTD.
Stanhope Road
Camberley Surrey GU15 3PS
United Kingdom

THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES ARE STILL SELLING TIMEX-Sinclair products for sure - write them for their catalog (even if you have one - let them know what equipment you have and what you are looking for!)

KNIGHTED COMPUTERS
707 Highland Street
Fulton, New York 13069

E. ARTHUR BROWN CO.
Division CS-7
1702 Oak Knoll Drive
Alexandria, Minnesota 56308

DATA COM
P.O. Box 775
Kernersville, North Carolina
27284

ZEBRA SYSTEMS, INC.
78-06 Jamaica Avenue
Woodhaven, New York 11421

THOMAS B. WOODS
P.O. Box 64
Jefferson, New Hampshire
03583

SOFTSYNC, INC.
14 East 34th Street
New York, New York
10016

BYTE-BACK CO.
Rt.3, Box 147
Brodie Road
Leesville, South Carolina
29070

RESTON PUBLISHING COMPANY, Inc
Attn: Marketing
11480 Sunset Hills Road
Reston, Virginia 22090
800-336-0338

ELECTIONS INFORMATION

It's time again to choose those officers who will run SINCUS for the coming year.

Nominations for officers will be accepted at the regular meeting in April. There are seven positions that have to be filled. The offices and current officers are:

President	Paul Hill
Vice-President	Bridget Kremnec
Treasurer	Glenn Wilson
Recording Secty.	Wes. Brzozowski
Financial Secty.	Gary Cole
Trustee #1	Richard Petrak
Trustee #2	Gary Ennis

To be eligible for nomination the following conditions must be met:

1. Active membership on a committee
2. 50% attendance during the past year
3. Member in good standing (dues paid up)
4. Minimum of 21 years old
5. Expect to attend 75% of future meetings as an elected official.

Voting will be at the regular meeting in May (16th). A mail in ballot will be published in the May issue of the newsletter for members who will not be able to attend the May meeting. The ballot must be received by the 15th of May in order to be counted.

Volunteers will be needed to help count ballots and check eligibility of the candidates.

Any member in good standing is eligible to vote.

With the proposals for the future of the group being proposed your involvement is needed. We have a lot to accomplish in the next year, and we can't do anything without your help.

If you want to make a nomination but cannot make the meeting just drop a note with the name and office to:

SINCUS
P.O. Box 36
Johnson City, New York 13790

(ED. note - mail-in nominations must be received by May 1 to guarantee making the May newsletter!)

Submitted by,

DOUG HOOVER
SINCUS
Chairman, Elections Committee

SOME KEY POINTS ABOUT T/S1000 KEYBOARD

by Bill Stemples, SINCUS

Most of us have "cussed" and "discussed" the pressure sensitive keyboard on Uncle Clive Sinclair's little monster. To keep the price of the computer below \$100, and subsequently earn a niche in the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, the keyboard had to be functional as well as inexpensive. Visiting a MacDonalds' restaurant, we see pressure sensitive keyboards on cash registers being used to keep track of customer orders. This application has proved to be quite successful and apparently holds up under constant use.

Just what does the T/S 1000 keyboard consist of? It is rectangular in shape (6 3/16 in. long by 2 1/2 in. wide). There are four rows of 10 keys per row, making a total of 40 keys. Three plastic sheets are glued together to make the keyboard sandwich assembly. The top layer has the keyboard characters printed on the top side and printed circuits are underside of this first sheet. One quarter inch printed discs under each key are integral with the circuits. The middle layer is like a template with (40) 7/16 in. holes located under the keys. The bottom plastic layer has the corresponding printed discs and circuits. The middle template sheets acts as an insulator but allows the upper discs to make contact with the corresponding lower discs to complete a circuit when a key is pressed. The resiliency of the top layer (printed keyboard sheet) in conjunction with air entrapped in the cutout space between layers, allows for the contact action of each of the keys. This entire sandwich assembly comes with peel off tape on the lower surface. For installation purposes, the double ribbon cable can be slipped through a slot in the upper right hand corner of the keyboard mounting area. The keyboard assembly is positioned and secured. The ribbon cables are then plugged into their respective connectors on the circuit board.

To digress a bit, it must be admitted that when I bought my first T/S 1000 computer back in August, 1982, I had never seen the computer and was shocked to see the so-named "greasy kid" keyboard. After that, a great deal has been learned about it! For the first 6 months, the keys were pressed a bit too hard. Instinct seemed to tell me that the harder a key was pressed, the better the contact was made! Nothing was further from the truth. A fellow SINCUS club member saw me bearing down on the keyboard and gave a well deserved critique on the technique. As he said, "There is a sensitive spot on the key outline and a surprisingly gentle touch is all that is needed to bring the 1/4 in. internal printed discs together to make the contact." My mistreatment of the keyboard plus 1 year of steady use seemed to have caused a failure of the "ENTER" key in the second row plus the four keys to the left. The wiring diagram showed that the keys are connected on the same circuit (printed) line. My keyboard failure seemed to occur after storing the computer in a plastic cover in a damp environment for a month. A slight amount of oxide may have formed at the connector contacts.

The writer remembered back in December 1982 (first meeting of SINCUS club) when it was the consensus of a number of users that the keyboard was quite rugged and no failures had been reported at that time. Since then, there have been a number of reported keyboard failures.

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SCME KEY POINTS ABOUT THE T/S 1000 COMPUTER KEYBOARD(continued)

The keyboard assembly is connected to the circuit board by dual ribbon cables containing five and eight printed flat wires respectively. These cables are plugged into connectors on the circuit board.

As you recall, a connector that plugs the 16K rampack to the computer circuit board has to be unplugged and plugged-in periodically to clean the contact points (ED. note- that is excellent and often overlooked advice!). Again, because of cost consideration, oxide free metals were not used. However, it is not practical to repeatedly unplug and plug-in the keyboard ribbon cables into their connectors for cleaning purposes.

If a group of 5 keys fail, carefully open up the computer case and unplug (pull out) the ribbon cable containing the suspected defective printed circuit. Apply a small amount of contact cleaner to the ends of the printed lines and wipe dry. It may even be necessary to cut off a small amount of material from the end of the cables(s). Replugging of the ribbon cables requires patience and extreme care. Trying to plug them in a number of times may result in worn, creased, and unusable printed circuit ends. Also, failure may have occurred after someone has carelessly opened the covers and caused a tear to develop in the ribbon cables at the board connectors.

It should be remembered that a new keyboard can be ordered directly from the TIMEX service center in Little Rock, Arkansas. The charge is \$7.50 plus \$2.50 for shipping.

Another source of a keyboard assembly is to find a computer owner who has installed a regular positive-action keyboard and has no use for the top cover of his/her T/S 1000. If the cover is not a gift, the going price is about \$5.

If you happen to own an early ZX-81 computer, trimming off the ribbon cables could present complications. It seems that the printed lines are encased in clear plastic and bare at the ends on one side only. It is very difficult to scrape off the plastic if the cable has been trimmed back as the printed lines are usually damaged in the process.

A reference to a ZX-81 keyboard failure was reported in the TIMEX-Sinclair User magazine, Vol. 1, No. 3 issue. It stated that, "A keyboard went bad in part after 1 year of extensive use. The ENTER FUNCTION key gradually failed so that first the FUNCTION key failed the the LET key, and finally the ENTER key. No further explanation was given for the cause of failure. Apparently, heavy usage combined with a vigorous touch caused the printed circuit to pull apart within the keys themselves.

In conclusion, it would be interesting to hear from other users and compare notes on this KEY subject!!

ø/ø

Bill Stemples
SINCUS

SH EXPRESS

by Gary Ennis

EDIT - our new computer technology/software became useless for this issue when Radio Shack was unable to fulfill my printer paper order! May I suggest people with the TIMEX-Sinclair 2040 printer huddle and make an arrangement with a Radio Shack store to get in one big order (perhaps at a discount). The paper for the Radio Shack TP-10 printer works fine in the TS2040 (Radio Shack cat. no. 26-1332) So we lost a bit of total copy for that reason.

SORRY- The second part of Wes' article about the brick wall in the TS 1000 will be published next month, along with an explanation of the cause sent in by a SINCUS member.

NEWS- The very latest news that I have on TIMEX products includes:

- (1) TIMEX is selling everything at half price over the 800-24-TIMEX phone number on credit card. They still had 2068's and a few printers, software. 1500's and modems were gone.
- (2) I have ordered the Byte Back modem which will work with the 2068 (it only needs software) and has an RS232 built in. Byte-Back is taking orders C.C.D. (\$3.00 charge).
- (3) The modem will be produced by a third party as per TIMEX hotline.
- (4) A third party will be selling an 80 column printer for the TIMEX 2068 (if not the TS 1000) in the near future.
- (5) SYNC lost so many ads after the Feb 22 bomb the next issue was alleged to be only 40 pages!
- (6) Many good software deals - ex. E. Arthur Brown Company is selling TS 1000 software 3 for \$10!!!

FACTS- The TIMEX-Sinclair 2068 is a super computer for the money! We are collecting a large library of software in the local area. You will have all of the computer you may ever need. I can account for every main home computer application for the TS 2068 except the "exercise fad". Word processing is weak, but all other applications: spread sheet, budgeting, filing, education, entertainment, scientific and telecommunications are well represented. Add to that we can, through the use of "First Loader" load BASIC programs of the TS 1000/ZX-81 into the TS 2068! So if you haven't yet called 800-24-TIMEX and bought a TS 2068, time is running out.

PERHAPS-I did receive word that the cartridge software is even being worked on by some "cottage industry" types!

Also, the technical manual - the one TIMEX gave to third party companies - will be available AFTER May 1. It will sell for \$25 and explain all of those things we're missing (how to get the 64 character display, etc) including the system software, I/O's, a reduced size schematic, etc. I promised not to give out the address until May 1 in print!

SINCUS-We ran a bit short on articles from members this month. Thanks to Bill Stemples for his very well written and informative article on the KEY points of the Keyboard. (If you haven't gotten that pun by now).

Anyway - we can always use ideas like that. Something straight ward to explain what you have learned or observed about your Sinclair computer or its software. Reviews of books or software are particularly needed. If you've got something you like (or dislike) - tell us all about it.

2K EXPRESS (continued):

An Open Letter to the Members of SINCUS, other Users' Groups and third party TIMEX-Sinclair equipment suppliers and dealers. Mostly this is directed at non-SINCUS members in an effort to build a Sinclair network.

Since TIMEX announced they were pulling out I have had some really bad days wondering if the money that I had invested, the energy I had given, and the enthusiasm I had for my TS 2068 and its future had been wasted. Worse yet, had I been a fool? Friends and visitors who had seen my 2068 in action seemed duly impressed and even talked about buying one. Then doubts set in as the future became very uncertain - what was next? Well, about three weeks ago (late March) the word was out - TIMEX is selling at half price everything they have! The people who would have bought the computer at full price now leaped at the chance to buy it at half price! Tom Woods (a software producer) reported to me that his sales QUADRUPLED! Debbie, at TIMEX, could not say how many TS 2068 they had. I only hope that it was the reported 200,000 plus. Here is why:

- 1) To build yourself a powerful home computer system based on the 2068, you need to be able to have the following items:
 - a) External memory device - AVAILABLE - any cassette recorder
 - b) Quality monitor - AVAILABLE - several brands \$99-999
 - c) Printer - AVAILABLE - TS 2040 thermal printer for "everyday" use
 - d) RS232 interface - AVAILABLE - now you can use any serial printer you can afford
 - e) Centronics interface - AVAILABLE ? a SINCUS member has built one, so I believe it can be available.
 - f) Disc drive - ???????????? I have an English magazine that has ads for the Sinclair Spectrum that states they are shipping the Micro-drives in England
 - g) Modem - AVAILABLE - at least one model is available
 - h) EVERYTHING ELSE WORTH HAVING IS BUILT IN - except voice synthesizer!
- 2) There existed a piece of software called "Chamelion" that converts the Spectrum software to the TIMEX 2068. If produced, the Spectrum has 2000 software titles for it. (Spectrum is the number 1 home computer in Europe with sales of 2,000,000 - there are only 7 million home computers in USA)
- 3) TIMEX has no reason not to provide service on the machines for the near future - long enough for us to enjoy the benefits before moving up!
- 4) The technical information will be available - look at all of the "cottage businesses" that grew up on the ZX-81/TS1000 market!

The final ingredient to make this work, it seems to me, is a new network of information. The Sinclair specific publications are shaky at best. I would like to volunteer as a clearing house for information. If you are a user group, send me your name PLUS the names of any user group that you know is still functioning. If you're a supplier and want to advertise in a national Sinclair newsletter - write to me. May I suggest to suppliers that you consider supporting the user groups by approaching them with a package of your products in exchange for their sincere public, and promoted, demonstration of the Sinclair computers using your products. I will respond to every inquiry and compile all of the information sent to me for everyone's use. Send it to:

GARY ENNIS
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